

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT: YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this essay is a word play on a song popularized by Frank Sinatra: “Love and marriage, go together like a horse and carriage..., you can’t have one without the other.” My argument is that Protestant evangelicals in the West, and particularly in the United States, do not realize just how much the modern ecumenical movement is rooted in the Protestant missionary movement of the 18th and 19th centuries. Missions forced Protestants to broaden their vision from a merely local and denominational perspective and to see Christianity as a truly global faith. The sense of urgency that characterized missionary activity led to a reorientation of priorities. When persons were involved in the effort of winning the peoples of the world to Christ, the task was so demanding that doctrinal and ecclesiastical differences began to fade in importance.

Although there are exceptions to this generalization, over time those who are involved in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and are focused on reaching the unreached find that their commonalities with others doing likewise are greater than their differences. That is especially so when compared with the differences between them and the non-Christian peoples whom they are seeking to evangelize. As this awareness grows, they are increasingly willing to engage in cooperative efforts and to think seriously about how ecclesial differences can be minimized or completely set aside.

At first a few words on definition, as the term “ecumenical” is rather elusive and freely used to mean different things. The word comes from Late Latin *oecumenicus*, from Late Greek *oikoumenikos*, from Greek *oikoumenē* the inhabited world, from feminine of *oikoumenos*, present passive participle of *oikein* to inhabit, from *oikos* house. *Oikoumenē* is used fifteen times in the New Testament and always means either the inhabited world or earth or inhabitants of the world (Mt. 24:14; Lk. 2:1; 4:5; 21:26; Ac. 11:28; 17:6, 31; 19:27; 24:5; Rom. 10:18; Heb. 1:6; 2:5; Rev. 3:10; 12:9; 16:14). Thus it originally meant worldwide or general in extent, influence, or application. Applied to the church, it meant general or universal, such as the ecumenical councils of the early Christian centuries. In more recent times it has taken on the connotation of first a quest for Protestant unity and then the unity of all Christian communions, based on the Scriptural text John 17:11, the statement in Jesus’ high priestly prayer for the disciples “that they may be one, as we are one.”

For the evangelical community the modern ecumenical movement has been a source of considerable discomfort, and a great many evangelicals reject involvement of any kind in this endeavour. The main charge they make is that instead of engaging in worldwide evangelism to bring the saving gospel of Jesus Christ to all people, it aims

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rather at bringing churches of all denominations and confessions together into a super-church or “World Church.” They claim this body will be an apostate, lowest common denominator church, instead of one composed of people who have accepted Jesus Christ, uphold the historic truths of the Christian faith, and seek to win others to him. Some opponents even go so far as to say that the ultimate aim is to unite everyone together in a Roman Catholic Church under the control of the pope.

This attitude, so pervasive in evangelical churches, has led to many negative assessments of ecumenism and outright hostility toward cooperative endeavours of any among Christian workers. This misunderstanding of ecumenism is based on a faulty understanding of Christian history, and raises a high and virtually impenetrable barrier to labouring together with anyone besides one’s own immediate spiritual compatriots to spread the gospel.

PIETISM AND THE BEGINNING OF ECUMENISM IN THE 18TH CENTURY

In the century and a half after the Reformation, Protestants gave little attention to proclaiming the gospel to others outside one’s own confined area. Churches were often under the domination of political rulers, while theologians debated minuscule points of doctrine and freely charged people not adhering to the same confession as heretics or at least holding inferior beliefs. For a century Europe was torn by wars in which religious and confessional differences played no small part. For most European Protestants religious belief was more a matter of the intellect than one’s inner being—of one’s head rather than one’s heart. A person harmonised faith and reason through the mind. Worship was rote practice, the recitation of liturgical phrases, following the lead of the minister.

Some theologians in the 17th century did call for more personal devotion, and this challenge to scholastic orthodoxy snowballed. Known as “pietism,” it was a Bible-centred moralism that emphasized personal conviction of sin, repentance, conversion, and a new life in Christ. Having experienced divine forgiveness, the believer then manifested Christ in his or her daily life through personal holiness and sensitivity to the needs of others. Worship was an emotional experience, while religion was highly personal and had to be felt inwardly. Historians have come to recognize the extraordinary importance of this renewal movement in the church, and a vast literature dealing with pietism and its theological, ecclesiological, and social impact has arisen.¹

AUGUST HERMANN FRANCKE AND HALLE PIETISM

¹ A useful and informative treatment of current thinking on pietism is Martin Brecht, et. al., eds., *Geschichte des Pietismus: im Auftrag der Historischen Kommission zur Erforschung des Pietismus* (4 vols., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993-2004). For the most recent scholarship on the topic see Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann, and James Van Horton Melton, eds., *Pietism in Germany and North America 1680-1820* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2009).

German pietism was crucial for renewing the missionary vision of the church. August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), a pastor and teacher at the University of Halle, was the great organizer in the movement. In the city of Halle he founded a series of institutions centred on his orphanage and schools, and the Francke Foundation was the most significant Protestant social enterprise in the entire 18th century. He inspired untold numbers of students to serve as pastors in Germany and missionaries in distant parts of the world—especially North America and South India. He raised funds to help support these works and by means of his extensive ecumenical ties.

The first venture of this sort was the sending of two missionaries to the Danish commercial enclave on Tranquebar on the Coromandel coast. Frederik IV, the [Lutheran] king of Denmark, had been affected by pietist spirituality and decided to start a mission in his Indian possession. Finding no support from orthodox clergy at home, through an intermediary he contacted a pietist figure in Berlin, Joachim Lange. A teacher and friend of Francke, Lange recommended two former students for the mission, young men who had studied for a time in Halle as well, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau. They agreed responded to the call, went to Copenhagen for ordination, and sailed to India, arriving in Tranquebar on 9 July 1706. The story of the significant work they accomplished has been told elsewhere,² and one could argue this was an ecumenical mission since it was initiated by the Danish king, the missionaries were German, and the field of ministry was in India.

The “Danish-Halle” work soon became known throughout Protestant Europe, and additional workers were dispatched to serve in South India. In fact, somewhere between 56 and 63 missionaries went out to India and other parts of the world during the course of the century, all of whom had studied at one of the Francke schools or the university, and many of the letters they sent home were published in a periodical *Hallesche Berichte* (*Halle Reports*) that was widely disseminated during the 18th century. Francke and his successors also utilized a large network of correspondents and personal connections to encourage interest in the missionary enterprises, and many even sent gifts to Halle to support the Indian mission.

Very quickly an English connection developed with Halle. Anton Wilhelm Böhme (1673-1722)—better known as Anthony William Boehm—came to England in 1701 in the entourage of Prince George of Denmark and consort of the future Queen Anne.³ He had studied theology at Halle and was an enthusiastic admirer of Francke, and even published a book in 1705 maintaining that pietism was a “new reformation” in Germany. Boehm’s most important accomplishment was to establish a connection

² Daniel Jeyaraj, *Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg: the Father of Modern Protestant Mission. An Indian Assessment* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), is the most recent treatment of the Tranquebar mission itself. For a detailed study and analysis of the entire Halle missionary outreach see the work edited by Andreas Gross, Y. Vincent Kumarados, and Heike Liebau, *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India* (3 vols., Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2006).

³ The most significant study of his life and work is Daniel L. Brunner, *Halle Pietists in England: Anthony William Boehm and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).

between Halle pietism and the English Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, founded in 1698/99. The action of this Anglican society in supporting a Royal Danish mission that sent German Lutheran missionaries to South India who were trained at the pietist centre in Halle is the earliest example of ecumenical cooperation in Protestantism.

Boehm translated and published the letters which the missionaries in Tranquebar had sent home to Copenhagen and Halle detailing their work. The first ten letters appeared in 1709 as *Propagation of the Gospel in the East* and would eventually be expanded to three parts through the publication of additional letters in 1710 and 1718.⁴ In 1710 he persuaded the SPCK to contribute to the support of the mission. A few years later it formed a “Special Committee for the Mission,” which hosted missionaries when they were passing through England, and sent New Testaments to India (and later a press and printer to publish the translations the missionaries were making).⁵

Then the SPCK became directly involved in sponsoring missionaries. A Danish-Halle worker, Benjamin Schulze, broke with the Danish authorities and went off on his own to start a mission in Madras, an area under British East India Company jurisdiction. The SPCK received EIC permission in 1728 to formally commission him as one of its workers, and soon others were sent out as well. The SPCK continued to supply funds to the Danish-Halle enterprise in Tranquebar as well as its own in Madras, but later on in the century both missions declined and fewer workers came out. After the EIC changed its constitution to allow missionaries in its territories and an Anglican establishment was put in place in Calcutta, SPCK involvement ceased and the surviving works were taken over by Anglican and Lutheran societies.

ZINZENDORF AND THE MORAVIAN MOVEMENT

The other pietist-inspired missionary effort of the 18th century was that of the Herrnhut or “Moravian” brethren. Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60) in Saxony, was raised as a pietist and spent six years at Francke’s school in Halle.⁶ After university studies in law he became an official at the king of Saxony’s court. With an inheritance he purchased an estate east of Dresden, and in 1722 he welcomed there a band of Protestant refugees from Moravia, known as the *Unitas Fratrum* or United Brethren, who had been driven out of their homes by Habsburg persecution.

Under his leadership they founded a village called Herrnhut (“Watched over by the Lord”), adopted a modified communitarian lifestyle, and introduced a number of distinctive religious practices, the details of which need not be discussed here.

⁴ Brunner: *Halle Pietists*, 110.

⁵ W. O. B. Allen and Edmund McClure: *Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*. (London, SPCK, 1898), 260-262; W. K. Lowther Clarke: *A History of the S.P.C.K.* (London: SPCK 1959), 61-62.

⁶ Among the noteworthy treatments are Arthur J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf, the Ecumenical Pioneer: A Study in the Moravian Contribution to Christian Mission and Unity* (London: SCM, 1962); John R. Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf The Story of His Life and Leadership in the Renewed Moravian Church* (Bethlehem, Pa., 1989); and Dietrich Meyer, *Zinzendorf und die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000).

Zinzendorf left his government post in 1727 to devote full time to the colony and even received Lutheran ordination as well as consecration as a bishop. He showed a remarkable tolerance toward other creeds and even devised a plan for the reunion of all churches that no one would accept. He was deeply committed to evangelism and Christian service, and the “Moravian” church was based on a common experience of salvation, mutual love, and deep emotional religious expression.

An outgrowth of this was a concern for foreign missions, resulting in what was the most extensive Protestant missionary operation of the entire century. While visiting Copenhagen in 1731 he met some converts of the Danish-Halle mission who urged him to send missionaries to their people. The count challenged his followers about the situation, and two men at once responded. They sailed in 1732 for the Danish Virgin Islands in the Caribbean, where they founded a self-supporting work among the black population. Many other Moravians answered the call to foreign service, and mission outposts were founded in at least a dozen places, including two in India.

The Moravians had established thriving churches in England and Holland, and these provided yet more funds and workers for missions. As they had an episcopal form of church government, the British government was pleased with the group and encouraged their settlement in the North American colonies.⁷ Their most significant overseas work turned out to be in America, first in Georgia and then in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. The ministry among the native Americans is one of the great sagas of mission history.

Moravian missionary efforts were noticed in England, and through a quarterly publication launched in London in 1790 to provide regular news about their work overseas, *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren Established among the Heathen*, they had a profound impact on the founding of the British missionary societies, particularly with the Baptist William Carey and the creators of the London Missionary Society, who read the publication.⁸

After arriving in India, Carey made contact with some Moravians in the area, and he asked the Baptist society to send out enough reinforcements to form a Moravian-style colony of seven or eight married couples which would support itself by agriculture and live together according to a common rule. He hoped that even converted Indians would join the colony. Upon relocating in Serampore in 1799 he drafted a set of rules for the mission “family” that allotted roles in the community much like the Moravians did and provided for holding possessions in common and communal financial arrangements, but this approach had fallen apart by 1807.⁹

⁷ Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 15. For the church’s role there see Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England 1728-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁸ The role of the Moravians and their influence on British missionary work is underscored by J. C. S Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England 1760-1800* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2001).

⁹ Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1992), 40-43.

From an ecumenical standpoint, many commentators mention Carey's proposal made in a letter to Andrew Fuller in 1806 that a regular decennial missionary conference be held at the Cape of Good Hope from 1810 or at the latest 1812. It would be a "general association of all denominations of Christians from the four quarters of the world." From such conferences, he believed, benefits would result that would benefit all missionary endeavour. Among these would be greater understanding, and those present could "more entirely enter into one another's views by two hours, than by two or three years' epistolary correspondence."¹⁰ That Carey was far ahead of his time is clear, but as would be expected, nothing resulted from his proposal and it is easy to overrate its importance.

THE GERMAN AWAKENING AND MISSIONARY COOPERATION

A parallel event to the evangelical awakening in later 18th century Britain, an event which profoundly affected global awareness and the formation of missionary societies was the *Erweckung* (Awakening) in German-speaking Europe. This arose from the pietist influences in southwestern Germany and may be referred to as a "second wave pietism." Taking the lead in this was the German Christianity Society, founded in 1780 by Pastor Johann Urlsperger of Augsburg. He hoped to unite all faithful Christians in an effort to further 'true doctrine and true blessedness.' Modeled on the English Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, it carried out its work through a magazine, personal contacts, and correspondence and contributed to the formation of missionary, Bible, and tract societies across Europe.¹¹ Considerable cross-fertilization occurred between the British and the Continental awakenings, including that in French-speaking Europe.

One result of this new pietism was the formation of institutions to train and send out missionaries. A figure in the Berlin *Erweckung*, Pastor Johannes Jänicke, initiated the first missionary training school in his church in 1800, and many of its eighty graduates served under the recently founded British boards. One was the colourful and controversial Charles (Karl) Rhenius who was appointed by the Church Missionary Society to South India. In 1815 the neo-pietists founded a mission seminary and society in Basel. Although its seat was in Switzerland, it drew the bulk of its support from southwestern Germany and had close ties with the English. By 1833 thirty Basel-trained workers were serving with the CMS, and it subsidized the education of missionary candidates all the way down to 1858.

INDIA AND MISSIONARY COOPERATION IN THE 19TH CENTURY

In his dated but still very useful study, W. R. Hogg suggested that in spite of the denominational individualism and particularism of the 19th century missionary efforts, far more cooperative efforts took place than many commentators realized. Because of this

¹⁰ Quoted in William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 17.

¹¹ Ernst Staehlin, *Die Christentumsgesellschaft in der Zeit von der Erweckung bis zur Gegenwart* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1974).

the 1910 World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh must be seen as the culmination of a long process, not the beginning of international and interdenominational cooperation. He identified four streams of cooperation that over time flowed together at Edinburgh:¹² (1) regional “field” conferences convened by missionaries to deal with immediate problems of theory, organisation and practice; (2) large interdenominational conferences in England and North America that brought Protestant evangelicals to consider issues of common concern—such as the Evangelical Alliance in London (1846), General Missionary Conference in New York (1854), Liverpool Conference (1860), London General Conference on Foreign Missions (1878), Centenary Conference on Foreign Missions in London (1888), and the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York (1900); (3) development at the home base of continuing consultative groups directly concerned with missionary administration and policy—London Secretaries’ Association (1819); Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland (1913), Foreign Missions Conference of North America (1893); Continental Missions Conference (1866) and its “Standing Committee” (*Ausschuss*) of German Protestant Missions (1885); and smaller Scandinavian and Dutch bodies; and (4) student Christian organizations—college YMCAs, Student Volunteer Movement (1888), Student Christian Movement of Great Britain (1898), and World Student Christian Federation (1895).

India played a leading role in organization of regional field conferences, a story that is well-known and can be briefly summarized.¹³ The earliest (c. 1825-1830) moves toward cooperation were the city mission associations in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. By mid-century regional gatherings had taken place—North India (meetings in Calcutta, 1855, Benares, 1857, Lahore, 1863); and South India (Ootacamund, 1858, Bangalore, 1879, Madras, 1900). They were attended by people from the various missionary societies in their own capacities; only the Madras meeting required official delegates from the societies. Finally were the all-India or national missionary conferences that occurred in late December every ten years, beginning in Allahabad (1872-3) and then Calcutta (1882-3), Bombay (1892-3), and Madras (1902). The gatherings were places where people could share ideas and offer proposals for advancing Christian work.

The three issues that increasingly commanded the attention first of expatriate missionaries and then indigenous Indians during the course of the 19th century were comity, cooperation, and church union. The efforts among the societies to divide up the Indian fields in such a way to minimize competition had a reasonable level of success. The meetings revealed cooperation taking place in a variety of ways. Church unity or union was not an aim at these conferences, but everyone was conscious of their lack of oneness and the common enemy they faced, Hinduism and Islam. V. S. Azariah saw denominational church disunity as a hindrance to evangelization: “Disunion in the mission field . . . is an offence and stumbling block to the non-Christian; a perplexity and a problem to the Christian; and a cause of wastage and inefficiency to the missionary

¹² Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 16.

¹³ For more details see Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 17-25; and O. L. Snaitang, *A History of Ecumenical Movement: An Introduction* (Bangalore: BTESS/SATHRI, 2007), 74-78

cause.”¹⁴ The idea of unity and an indigenous Indian church were inseparable. Suggestions for unity were in the background of demands for a “native church” made by both Indian Christians and some progressive missionaries. K. C. Chatterjee underscored the need for the freedom of the church to grow in harmony with its own environment. The union process should be allowed to grow into an organisation, and the church should have freedom of its own, leaving behind Western divisions.¹⁵

It was in the first decade of the 20th century that the first steps in church union occurred in South India. Several Presbyterian church missions joined together into one, and with the accession of Congregationalists in the area, the South India United Church was formed in 1908. The attempt to secure a wider federation through the Jubbelpore Resolutions which this church adopted in 1909 failed because of a lack of interest on the part of other churches in the region.

WORLD MISSIONARY CONFERENCE, EDINBURGH, 14-23 JUNE 1910

Some saw this as the ‘third’ ecumenical missionary conference, but it was not as large, and was more carefully planned than the 1888 and 1900 gatherings.¹⁶ Space does not permit a discussion of the meeting itself but the actions of Commission VIII “Co-Operation and the Promotion of Unity” are relevant to the discussion at hand.¹⁷ The commission sent out a detailed questionnaire to key people on the various mission fields that sought information on five areas of interest: topics of comity, missionary conferences on the field, joint actions by missions and churches, moves toward federation and union, and cooperation at the home base. A report was written incorporating the findings of the inquiry which brought to light a great deal of information about what was happening in various parts of the world.

Commission VIII recommended that the ecumenical momentum be kept alive by creating a Continuation Committee, an idea which the WMC approved. It was to be a thirty-five member body—ten each from Britain, North America, the European continent, and one each representing Australasia, India, China, Japan, and Africa.¹⁸ The conference’s business committee made the appointments and announced them on the last day. John R. Mott (1865-1955), an American Methodist and indefatigable organizer of missionary and student endeavours as well as chair of the WMC, was named chairperson, with Eugene Stock of the Church Missionary Society and German missiologist Julius Richter as vice-chairs. The secretary was J. H. Oldham, a dynamic Scot who had helped organize the WMC. He essentially held the Continuation Committee together and made

¹⁴ *The Reunion of Christendom*, quoted in F. J. Balasundaram, “The Growth and Development of Ecumenical Movement in India,” *National Council of Churches Review* 115/5 (May 1995), 389.

¹⁵ *Report of the Third Decennial Conference* (Bombay, 1892) quoted in Balasundaram, *NCCR*, 392

¹⁶ Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), is the most recent and insightful study of the meeting.

¹⁷ This is volume 8 in the World Missionary Conference 1910 series, published by Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier in Edinburgh and London, and Fleming H. Revell in New York, Chicago and Toronto.

¹⁸ For the Continuation Committee and his role in it see Richard V. Pierard, “John R. Mott and the Rift in the Ecumenical Movement during World War I,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 23/4 (Fall 1986), 601-604.

it function. Oldham was also named to edit the new *International Review of Missions*, which was intended to foster a sense of unity in the task of world evangelization

The committee authorized Mott to visit the Christian communities in Asia (October 1912-May 1913) to bring the Edinburgh vision and technique of cooperation to the younger churches in the East. While in India he visited Christian leaders in several cities and 15 to 20 percent of the various delegations were local people, a substantial improvement from past situations. An all-India conference was hastily arranged in Calcutta in December 1912 (none had met in ten years), that created a National Missionary Council of India to deal with problems that were national in scope and to maintain contact with the Continuation Committee.¹⁹

WORLD WAR I AND ECUMENICAL GROWTH IN INDIA

The outbreak of a general war in 1914 was a terrible disaster for the budding ecumenical movement. The conflict dashed all hope of maintaining the ecumenical ideal of the “supranationality of missions,” that is, missionary work was the task of the entire church and was not to be linked with any specific nation or country. Theologians (including foreign mission society executives and missions theorists) on both sides of the English Channel hurled bitter accusations against one another about who was responsible for the war, and the Allies began rounding up missionaries of German nationality as soon as they conquered German colonial possessions and interned or repatriated them. Only in a few places (South Africa and New Guinea) missionaries were allowed to continue working, but under close supervision.²⁰ John R. Mott’s efforts to hold the Continuation Committee together went nowhere. When the U.S. finally entered the war in 1917 and Mott participated in a diplomatic mission to Russia, the German members of the Continuation Committee denounced him and withdrew from the ecumenical body in a move that was aired on both sides of the battle lines.²¹

The situation in India was particularly interesting.²² Some 400 German missionaries worked in the subcontinent, and the Government of India was inclined to leave them alone but pressure from British hard-liners forced the regime to move against the foreigners. They were rounded up and placed in internment camps—Ahma[e]dnagar in Maharashtra and Belgaum in Karnataka. The women, children, and old men were repatriated. Inability to receive funds from Europe impoverished the mission works, and removing the expatriate workers left them virtually destitute. The National Missionary Council (NMC) responded with a Continental Missions Relief Fund.

¹⁹ Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 152-153; C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott 1865-1955: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 386-393. Text of the agreement is in M. K. Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India: Source Materials* (Dehi: ISPCK, 2003), 308-311.

²⁰ Richard V. Pierard, “Shaking the Foundations. World War I, the Western Allies, and German Protestant Missions,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22 (January 1998), 13-19.

²¹ Pierard, “Mott and the Rift in the Ecumenical Movement,” 604-618.

²² The details about and documentation of the treatment and rescue of the German mission enterprises are contained in Richard V. Pierard, “The Preservation of “Orphaned” German Protestant Missionary Works in India during World War I,” in *Mission und Gewalt*, ed. Ulrich van der Heyden and Jürgen Becher (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000), 495-507.

Foss Westcott, Bishop of Chota Nagpur (in 1919 he would become Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India) arranged to take over the work of the Lutheran Gossner Mission in Bihar. He turned to various sources to obtain funds to support the educational and philanthropic works and utilized the Anglican missionary force in his diocese to keep the mission intact, pending the return of the Germans. He arranged for indigenous Lutheran pastors to carry out the spiritual ministry with Anglicans giving advice and help when needed, but he would not allow any Lutherans to transfer their membership to the Church of England. In 1919 the NMC brokered the transfer of the property to the autonomous Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church, and it is now an independent Lutheran church.

In the south arrangements were made with the Church of Sweden, Danish Lutherans, and the Augustana and Ohio Lutheran Synods in the U.S. to take charge of the Leipzig Mission's field in Tamil Nadu, and in 1919 it was transformed into the autonomous Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church. In Andhra Pradesh American Lutherans took over funding the work of four German societies and eventually staffed the stations as well. In Kerala the NMC worked out an agreement to protect the Basel Mission Society's industrial mission from confiscation to pay German debts to Allied creditors and arranged that all missionaries working in its churches were of Swiss, not German nationality.

In the immediate postwar years mission agencies in the U.S., Great Britain, Sweden, and Denmark continued to provide assistance to the former German mission enterprises. At the same time, Mott and Oldham lobbied the peace conference at Paris to include a clause in the Versailles treaty that would allow German mission properties to be placed in the hands of trustees of the same "faith" (denomination) as that of the mission involved, rather than be liquidated to pay war debts to Allied creditors.²³ This made it possible for German missionaries to return after passions had subsided and resume their ministries. The successors to the Continuation Committee (International Missionary Council, 1921) and NMC (National Christian Council, 1923) continued looking to find ways for German missionaries to return. Finally, the government's ban on "enemy" subjects in India was lifted in 1925 and the German missionary societies were allowed to return in 1926. The ecumenical bodies in India and the ties with Europe and the U.S. proved to be crucial in preserving the German mission works.

THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

The Continuation Committee had ceased to function, and in April 1918 representatives from the Conference of British Missionary Societies and the Foreign Missions Conference of North America met in London to create the Emergency Committee of Cooperating Missions. It would handle questions of governmental relations, consider ways to help war-impaired missions, and harmonize the approach to problems in the transition from war to peace. It endeavoured to work for reconciliation with the Germans and to lay the groundwork for forming a permanent International

²³ Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 185

Missionary Council (IMC), which was achieved at Lake Mohonk, New York in 1921. Particularly significant was that its members would not be missionary societies per se but the national Christian organizations of the participating countries. Administratively it was a federation of national Christian councils and councils of churches. It shifted from being a missionary-based council to a gathering of church leaders.

One can see the same transition in India where in 1923 the NMC changed itself to the National Christian Council of India, Burma, and Ceylon, thus being an organization of churches rather than missionary societies. After Burma and Ceylon became independent, it was simply the National Christian Council of India. In 1979 it renamed itself the National Council of Churches of India.

The functions of the IMC were defined as: to stimulate thinking and investigation on missionary questions, to help co-ordinate the activities of the national missionary organizations in different countries through common consultation, to help unite Christian public opinion in support of freedom of conscience and religion and of missionary liberty, to help marshal the Christian forces of the world to seek justice in international and intersocial relations, especially where politically weaker people were involved, and to be responsible for publishing the *International Review of Missions* and other items that may contribute to the study of missionary questions.²⁴

The changing character of the IMC was evident in its conferences. Jerusalem (1927) put less emphasis on evangelistic triumphalism and more on theological discussion of this and other issues, like secularism and social problems, and especially the role of the younger churches. At Tambaram, Madras (1938) the focus shifted to the mission of the church. It was not missionary societies but the church itself that was the missionary to the world. At Whitby (Ontario, Canada) in 1947 the IMC considered the witness of the church in a revolutionary world. Moving from the church-centric view of mission at Tambaram, Whitby directed attention to the theme of partnership in mission. Western missionaries would work through the younger churches as partners, not as overseers or directors. At Willingen, Germany in 1952 mission was linked with the pursuit of unity. The Accra, Ghana meeting in 1957 stressed lay involvement in mission, but it was mainly fixated on integration with the World Council of Churches. At the Delhi assembly in 1961 the IMC was formally absorbed into the WCC as its Division of World Mission and Evangelism.²⁵

UNITED CHURCHES IN INDIA

India has been the most successful country in ecumenical advance through the process of church unions. Beginning with the interdenominational union in 1908 (South India United Church) and the addition of the Basel Mission Church in 1919, a church formed that drew from three traditions—Calvinist, Episcopal, and Methodist revivalist—and acknowledged the validity of these scriptural elements of ecclesiastical governance. A Conference on Church Union at Tranquebar in 1919 hosted by Bishop V. S. Azariah

²⁴ Snaitang, *History of Ecumenical Movement*, 108.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 106-112.

accepted the fact that the hoped-for church would be a unity in diversity and would preserve each ecclesiastical system with its rich heritage and biblical basis. It then proposed unity on the following basis:

- (1) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation.
- (2) The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.
- (3) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- (4) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted.

We understand that the acceptance of the fact of the Episcopate does not involve the acceptance of any theory of the origin of episcopacy nor any doctrinal interpretation of the fact. It is further agreed that the terms of union should involve no Christian community in the necessity of disowning its past, and we find it no part of our duty to call in question the validity of each other's orders.²⁶

It took ten years for a committee to prepare a statement on the scheme of union and protracted negotiations followed. Only in 1947 was the Constitution of the Church of South India accepted and the church officially created. C. B. Firth aptly characterized the process: "For an act of union is in a sense only a beginning; it initiates a process of growing together."²⁷ Similar lengthy negotiations occurred in the North, starting in 1929, and only in 1970 was unity achieved through the creation of the Church of North India.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

It is clear from the foregoing that cooperation and joint-effort is an important aspect of the modern-day church. Christians do not function just as individuals. They need each other, and churches need each other as well. Those who participated in Commission VIII at Edinburgh 1910 recognized that we can do more together in our evangelistic outreach when we work together. Moreover, when we get to know one another, we learn from each person's experience. No one has all the truth. The ecumenist teaches the evangelical about the diversity of peoples and how yet we can be one. The evangelical teaches the ecumenist about the importance of having a burning desire to spread the gospel to those who have never heard. The challenge placed before present-day Christians is that of how they can live a balanced Christian life, recognizing that both positions are correct.

As we enter the second century after Edinburgh many questions about missionary outreach, global cooperation, and church unity remain open and as relevant as ever:

1. How is a united church poised to engage in vital mission? Has it been so weakened by doctrinal compromise that it cannot do evangelism? Or to the contrary, does settling or at least learning to live with differences release spiritual energy for mission?

²⁶ Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India*, 318,

²⁷ C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2005), 243.

2. How can evangelicals and ecumenicals resolve their differences? Does there have to be such a divide and hostility between these two wings of the church?
3. Does striving for organizational unity sap the strength of those involved in the conversation and leave them weak and without any will for evangelism?
4. How do we balance the proclamation of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ with confronting the social sin that so enervates our society?
5. How do we strip away those things in church life that hinder evangelistic effort?
6. How does having a united church prepare Christians for the struggle against the forces of evil and darkness?
7. What is meant by “unity”? Must we have organic unity to experience the wholeness we have in Christ?

A former president of the National Council of Churches in India provides some thoughtful words of wisdom that not only bring this discussion to a conclusion but point to where it should go in the future:

The unity of the Church envisages the unity of the whole humankind. Ultimately the kingdom of God replaces the Church. It is the kingdom to which all nations come and belong. It is the kingdom in which Christ reigns supreme. It is towards this goal that the Church strives as it prays ‘thy Kingdom come’ in unison all over the world.²⁸

²⁸ Bishop S. K. Parmer, “Ecumenical Movement and the Church,” *National Council of Churches Review* 115/5 (May 1998), 368.

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